



Tax Hints

for Tax Professionals

Internal Revenue Service
Office of National Public
Liaison (NPL)

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Key Service Initiative to Better Serve Taxpayers and Practitioners

On September 2, Commissioner Doug Shulman and senior IRS executives moderated a public meeting with federal and state tax administration officials, as part of the Tax Return Preparer Review (TRPR), a wide-ranging study of tax preparation issues. Previously, on July 30, IRS had launched TRPR with a forum for consumers and tax preparers. Both meetings were in Washington DC; as the meetings were being planned, IRS staff had been invited to comment via email as part of the review.

Both forums began with prepared remarks followed by lively, frank and candid discussions between the IRS moderators and the panel members. For the July forum a transcript, other background and participant bios are [here](#). Similar information on the September meeting is [here](#).

A third meeting is under consideration with details expected soon. By the end of the year, with analysis of findings completed, Mr. Shulman will make recommendations to the Treasury Secretary and the President on how to better leverage the tax preparer community for the overall benefit of the tax system. Check [here](#) for ongoing updates on the review.

Some images taken during the July and September meetings are on Page 3

Taxpayer Advocacy Panel Releases 2008 Annual Report

On August 26 the Taxpayer Advocacy Panel (TAP), a Federal Advisory Committee, released its 2008 Annual Report describing its activities and 112 recommendations to improve IRS service and customer satisfaction.

One key TAP finding, documentation of an error in Forms SSA-1099 sent out by the Social Security Administration, resulted in immediate IRS intervention to alert the public to the error. Other recommendations will help improve taxpayer compliance through improvements in audit scheduling and installment agreements and clarification of the IRS Statutory Notice of Deficiency to prevent taxpayers from signing that notice without understanding that they are agreeing to a stated assessment by the IRS.

In the report 2008 TAP Chair Henry A. Mosler praised panel members who “worked tirelessly to meet with taxpayers across the country to learn what they had to say about the IRS.” Mosler thanked the Treasury Department, the IRS and the Taxpayer Advocate Service for their support and partnership in working towards improved IRS service and taxpayer satisfaction. Mosler noted, “The year 2008 was an outstanding year for the Taxpayer Advocacy Panel. The 2009 Panel is already hard at work producing new recommendations to the IRS. We appreciate the opportunity the Taxpayer Advocacy Panel provides average citizens to participate in the IRS decision-making process.” Taxpayers can direct questions about TAP or suggestions to improve IRS services to the Panel’s toll-free number, 1-888-912-1227. For the report click www.improveirs.org.

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UBS Agreement a “Major Step Forward” in Combating Bank Secrecy

In remarks to the press on August 19, IRS Commissioner Douglas Shulman reported on the conclusion of negotiations which will secure for IRS information long sought from UBS on taxpayers who have evaded their tax obligations by hiding money in offshore UBS accounts. The Swiss Government cooperated both in reaching the unprecedented agreement and in committing to work further with the Service to implement it.

Mr. Shulman said, “This is no mere keyhole into the hidden world of bank secrecy. This agreement represents a major step forward with the IRS's efforts to pierce the veil of bank secrecy and combat offshore tax evasion.”

With the agreement in place, Mr. Shulman made clear that “the IRS will vigorously pursue tax cheats around the world, no matter how remote or secret the location. And we will work with other governments where possible to obtain the information we need. Wealthy Americans who have hidden their money offshore will find themselves in a jam.” He added, “There is still time—although the clock is ticking—to come in and get right with the government. People with unreported offshore income should immediately contact their tax professional.”

The Commissioner went on to outline what affected taxpayers and practitioners can expect in coming weeks as implementation of the agreement progresses. Click for the [complete text](#) of Commissioner Shulman's remarks.

Filing Statistics Reveal Interesting Trends

The latest findings from the Research, Analysis, and Statistics (RAS) Weekly Tracking Report for individual income tax returns for the week ending June 26, 2009 provided a great many eye-opening statistics, compared to last filing season.

As of June 26, the IRS received about 135.4 million total individual returns, about 10.7 million returns less than the number of returns received at this time last year. This represents around 96% of the individual income tax returns we expect to receive this year. The total number of returns received this year is well below the number filed at the comparable time last year—last year's figures include returns filed to claim the Economic Stimulus payments.

Of the 135.4 million total individual returns, e-filed returns totaled 92.4 million (68%) while paper totaled 43 million (32%). The current e-file rate of 68% is about 8 percentage points higher than at this point in time last year. Filings last year solely to claim the Economic Stimulus payments tended more toward paper.

Total e-file volume of 92.4 million returns is over 5.1 million higher than the comparable weekly number for last year, while total paper returns (43 million) are about 15.8 million lower.

Of the total 92.4 million returns e-filed, online filings (31.7 million or over 34% of total e-filed) are up by about 5.1 million (19%) and practitioner (ERO) e-file returns (60.7 million or just under 66% of total e-file) are down by about 26,000 (about 0.04%) compared to this time last year. The increase in returns filed on-line may reflect a decrease in the marginal cost of e-filing from a home computer.

The number of Free File (Consortium) returns received so far is around 3 million returns, compared to about 4.7 million returns this time last year—about a 37% decrease, perhaps reflecting increased availability and marketing of free and low cost online tax preparation outside of the IRS Free File program. There will be one more such report—an end of the year wrap-up in December.



Important Upcoming Webinar on September 16— When Businesses Should File Form 8300 for Cash Transactions

The Service's Small Business/Self-Employed Division (SB/SE) is presenting a webinar for Tax Professionals on September 16 which will also be recorded for later viewing. Topics to be covered include:

- Definition of Cash
- Form 8300 Filing Requirements
- Filing Form 8300
- Related and Aggregated Transactions
- Penalties for non-compliance

Enrolled agents can earn one CPE credit for a minimum 50-minute participation from the start of the webinar. Other tax professionals may receive credit if the webinar meets your organization's or state's CPE requirements. To receive credit, you must attend one of the three September 16, 2009 presentations.

Register for the webinar using your e-mail address and use the same e-mail address to log in to attend. This will confirm your attendance and generate your Certificate of Completion. Only September 16, 2009 participants will receive certificates. If you do not need a certificate to obtain CPE credit, you may choose to view the archived version of the webinar which will be available later on IRS.gov. Look for your Certificate of Completion by e-mail approximately one week after the webinar. If you have met all requirements, you will receive your certificate automatically.

All attendees must go to www.irs.gov and search Webinars for information and to download a pdf file of the presentation slides prior to the webinar session. Be sure to use the special link provided via e-mail after registration to view the actual webinar session; it may differ from the registration link above. No special access number is needed to view the webinar or access the Web link.

You must test your computer's capability to display the webinar properly in advance to be sure you have the required minimum connection speed. Follow the directions on the Web site to make this test. A Help page is available if you have problems. Please note: dial-up users will not be able to view the webinar. If you require special accommodations (for example, a larger-print PDF of the slides) contact Brian Finn at nationalphoneforum@irs.gov. Q&A will be provided at the end of the presentation. For complete schedule and information and to register and attend: <http://cs.sbtv.com/irswebinarreg/>.





New IRS Multimedia ARRA Information Sources Announced

On August 21, 2009 the Service announced the availability of video and audio products to help taxpayers take full advantage of the 2009 tax provisions in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). People can visit the video site at www.youtube.com/irsvideos to see information about the Recovery, tax tips and how-to videos. These videos will be in English, Spanish, American Sign Language and other languages. People can visit the audio site at [iTunes](#) to listen to IRS podcasts about ARRA tax credits. People without an [iTunes](#) account can hear those same podcasts, in English and Spanish, on the IRS.gov website's [Multimedia Center](#).

Nationwide Tax Forums: Still Time to Attend or You Can Go Online

There are only two learning and networking opportunities left as the 2009 Nationwide Tax Forum season winds down: September 8—10 in Dallas, Texas and September 22—24 in Atlanta, Georgia. On-site registration is an option for both forums.

At forums practitioners can learn about the latest IRS e-Services products, can bring one stubborn case to the Practitioner Case Resolution Room or check out the expo hall for hands-on vendor demonstrations of the latest tax products and services. Further information, schedules or on-line registration for Atlanta is [here](#).

For those who cannot attend either of these final two forums of 2009, Nationwide Tax Forums Online (NTFO) offers an alternative. NTFO provides information for tax professionals from the speakers at the forums. This online version is updated to provide the most current information, as well as guidance on IRS procedures and processes. More information is [here](#).

National Public Liaison Division (NPL)

Led by the Chief, Communications and Liaison, IRS and the NPL Director, NPL works to enhance the IRS's relationships with national stakeholders and federal partners to create opportunities to meet stakeholder needs and to resolve issues of mutual concern.

NPL also coordinates:

- [The IRS Advisory Council \(IRSAC\)](#)
- [The Information Reporting Program Advisory Committee \(IRPAC\)](#)
- [The IRS Nationwide Tax Forums](#)
- Stakeholder Relationships
- Issue Tracking
- [Nationwide Tax Forums Online \(NTFO\)](#)

Contact NPL via email at [National Public Liaison](#) or at (202) 622-3359, or visit the [Tax Professionals](#) website.